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Programme cooperation for children and women from a human rights perspective

Summary

The present report describes progress made by UNICEF in implementing Executive Board decision 1991/9 (E/ICEF/1991/15) on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It reviews recent experience and discusses how UNICEF country offices are applying human rights principles and perspectives to programmes of cooperation with national partners for the realization of children's and women's rights, within the context of initiatives for United Nations reform.

The report highlights how the normative framework of international human rights standards systematically guides the practical work of UNICEF in fulfilling its mission and mandate and its support to national implementation efforts. It presents lessons from country experiences and describes how programmes for improved outcomes in the survival, development, protection and participation of children are strengthened by this normative frame of reference.

The report outlines how principles of good programming, such as the assessment and analysis of the situation of children, the use of disaggregated data to identify and address disparities, participatory approaches, partnerships, community capacity building and empowerment, become programmatic imperatives from a rights perspective. It discusses how principles of equity and non-discrimination can be used to develop approaches to the structural as well as immediate factors that affect the realization of children's and women's rights. It highlights the importance of accountability towards children at political,

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institutional and community levels and outlines the cross-sectoral, convergent focus of UNICEF work on the physical, emotional and intellectual development of children. Finally, the report outlines some of the challenges to building organizational capacity and learning for programme cooperation in a rights perspective.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–6	4
II.	The UNICEF mandate and mission: a rights perspective	7–12	4
III.	Programming from a rights perspective	13–50	5
	A. Addressing discrimination and creating conditions for the universal realization of rights	17–23	6
	B. Shaping more convergent approaches to development outcomes	24–28	7
	C. Strengthening the programming process	29–43	8
	D. Developing rights-based indicators and monitoring	44–46	11
	E. Building organizational capacity and learning	47–50	12
IV.	Conclusion	51–52	12

"We the peoples of the United Nations ... determined ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, ... have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims" (United Nations Charter).

The purposes of the United Nations are: "... to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems ... and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion" (United Nations Charter).

"Every individual and every organ of society ... shall strive ... to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance... among member states themselves." (Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

"The advancement of human rights needs to be integrated into all principal United Nations activities and programmes". (Secretary-General Pledges 'Quiet Revolution' in United Nations, Presents Reform Proposals to General Assembly, 17 July 1998, Press Release SG/SM/6284/Rev.2, GA/9282/Rev.2).

I. Introduction

1. The dramatic political changes in the world in the last 10 years and the implementation of reform measures within the United Nations have refocused attention on the vision of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The fundamental values and purpose of the United Nations system were defined through these documents, which remain as valid today as when they were written.

2. The message that resonates through both the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that the quest for justice, equality, peace, security, people's participation and the sustained improvements in the quality of life of all people are inseparable human pursuits. These compelling human aspirations have shaped the body of binding international human rights instruments and are reflected in the development goals adopted by various global conferences, notably in the 1990s. All these concerns remain central to the work of the United Nations on the eve of the new century. In common with other members of the United Nations family, and in the context of the current reforms, UNICEF continues to explore ways of making its advocacy and programme cooperation contribute more effectively to the realization of human rights.

3. The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child a decade ago gave renewed impetus to the original mission and mandate of UNICEF. General Assembly resolution 1391 (xiv) of 20 November 1959 stated that "aid provided through [UNICEF] constitutes a practical way for international cooperation to help countries carry out the aims proclaimed in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child". In 1991, the report to the Executive Board on the role of UNICEF in the implementation of the Convention on he Rights of the Child stated that it "provides UNICEF and other operational bodies of the United Nations family with a new opportunity to demonstrate how the principles of human rights can become an integral part of the daily work of development agencies". (E/ICEF/1991/L.7, paragraph 58).

4. The Secretary General's reaffirmation in July 1997 of the principle of the founding documents of the United Nations that human rights and human development are inseparable concepts, both of which are integral to the mission of United Nations agencies, has helped to define the context in which the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) are currently evolving. Guidelines for the UNDAF and the Common Country Assessments (CCA) to which it is linked, emphasize the role of participating agencies in supporting the national implementation of a range of development goals, informed by the United Nations human rights mandate and applicable international standards. In recent months, both the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank have issued policy papers on development and human rights.[1]

5. As the new millennium approaches, dialogue and closer reflection are taking place among development partners on practical approaches to the progressive and sustained realization of human rights, including those of children. Current discussions on the role and obligations of Governments, the strategic contribution of international cooperation, the importance of vibrant civil society and community organizations, the links between peace, security and the satisfaction of basic human needs, gender equality, the recognition that children are holders of rights and the links between women's status and overall human progress, all have a basis in international standards of human rights.

6. Development organizations such as UNICEF increasingly are being called upon to help national partners find ways to mobilize the resources and develop the tools and capacities necessary for the sustained implementation of their treaty obligations. This requires the ability to build strong linkages between justice and the rule of law, the formation of public policy, the equitable allocation of resources for basic human needs and the facilitation of social and economic processes that support families and community-led initiatives. Development partners working in a human rights perspective must also give renewed attention to activities that enable women and children, especially adolescents, to participate fully in shaping the personal and public spheres of their lives.

II. The UNICEF mandate and mission: a rights perspective

7. An almost universal consensus has provided the basis for the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, to a considerable extent, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Together with the declarations of recent global summits, this constitutes a broad agreement that the realization of children's and women's rights is a fundamental condition for sustained improvements in human development. The vast majority of States have now accepted legally binding forms

[1] "Integrating Human Rights with Sustainable Human Development", a UNDP Policy Document, 1998; "Development and Human Rights, The Role of the World Bank", The World Bank, 1998.

of accountability towards all those in respect of whom they exercise jurisdiction, including children and women specifically.

8. As an international development organization tasked by its mandate and mission statement to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to promote the equal rights of women and girls, UNICEF has worked since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 to identify and promote ways in which normative processes of international human rights law can inform and guide practical actions in favour of children and women. The organization has moved from viewing the Convention primarily as a basis for global advocacy to exploring both its role and the role of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as normative frames of reference for the design and implementation of programmes of cooperation with national partners. Both Conventions provide a basis for policy dialogue with Governments and other development partners, through a process which assists the understanding of the overall factors affecting the realization of children's and women's rights and of the specific priority actions which need to be taken in each country context in order to promote them. The aims and principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women have become more central to the concerns of UNICEF cooperation as the links between women's status and the achievement of such major development goals as poverty reduction, child survival, the elimination of malnutrition, maternal mortality reduction and educational achievement are better understood.

9. UNICEF has been encouraged by the degree of commitment with which many Governments are approaching their obligations under both Conventions. Requests from national partners for advice and assistance in meeting treaty obligations to children and women have prompted UNICEF to follow closely the work and concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and, more recently, the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Through its assistance to country programmes, UNICEF is responding to these, to the mission statement adopted by the Executive Board in 1996 and to the roles of UNICEF envisaged in Article 45 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF offices are working with national partners, in an increasingly systematic way, to identify explicitly rights-based approaches to such complex problems affecting the realization of human rights as maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, child labour, malnutrition and the access of girls to education, and to reflect these approaches in their mutual cooperation.

10. Securing the rights of children in situations of armed conflict has also become a major concern for countries in every region. The Convention on the Rights of the Child incorporates humanitarian law in Article 38 and thereby provides a basis for an integrated approach to programming in unstable environments. The Convention allows no derogation in emergencies and emphasizes that access for all children to protection and basic services is always an imperative. UNICEF is drawing on international humanitarian law to guide its work and partnerships for women and children displaced by armed conflicts.

11. In 1998, following extensive consultation and assessment of various programming initiatives, the Executive Director issued initial guidance for field offices on a human rights approach to UNICEF programming for children and women (CF/EXD/1998/04). This document provides staff with an overview of key principles that are common to most human rights instruments. It emphasizes the importance of both Conventions to the work of UNICEF and outlines how a rights perspective should inform the various stages of the programming process, within the context of the UNDAF and national policies. This thinking is also reflected in the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1).

12. Recent approaches in UNICEF also emphasize the inseparable connection between the pursuit of children's and women's rights and the progressive and sustained achievement of human development goals. This linkage is particularly evident when examining the reasons for relatively slow progress towards some of the more complex goals adopted for the year 2000 by the World Summit for Children. Increasingly, issues related not only to national policies and programmes but also to cultural, economic and other deep-rooted factors in society are seen to affect outcomes in child survival, protection, development and participation, and for this reason, may need to be explicitly addressed.

III. Programming from a rights perspective

13. Human rights instruments share a number of core principles. For UNICEF, these principles increasingly serve as conceptual "ground rules" for approaching development issues from a human rights perspective and also as guides to better programming. In addition, they provide a basis for discussion with partners on the overall aims and specific strategies of development activities.

14. The adoption of a rights-based approach to development is not seen as necessarily requiring a major revision of development goals and objectives. Many well-established development programmes, including those aiming to provide universal access to basic services, have been broadly consistent with human rights principles and often have effectively promoted them, albeit not always explicitly. However, some fundamental reorientations of strategic approach will be required to fully reflect a rights-based approach in programme cooperation; these are, in many cases, already being adopted. They involve the revision of programme strategies to place clear emphasis on participation by people who are poor, as well as on equity and universality; on empowerment of communities and families to take effective action for improved health, education and other outcomes; and on the use of a mix of indicators to measure progress which better reflects the factors affecting the realization of human rights in society. They also include giving higher priority to interventions to address rights issues, notably in respect of children's protection and self-expression, which have been widely underemphasized in development policies in the past. The principles discussed below are therefore not unique to a rights approach to development, but they become imperatives for programming from such a perspective.

15. National and global development goals for children's survival, better child and maternal health, for every child's access to good quality basic education, for universal access to clean water and safe excreta disposal, and for poverty reduction more generally, all have a normative basis. They have common roots in the principle that all human beings are created equal in dignity and in rights. On this basis, all persons have a right to an adequate standard of living and to those basic services that enable them to live with dignity, to meet their basic needs, to gain access to opportunities for realizing their full human potential and to participate in shaping the processes that influence the quality of their daily lives.

16. From a rights perspective, and based on key principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, development goals and programmes for children should aim to: (a) ensure that all children, boys and girls equally, survive and are nurtured and protected in their homes and communities in ways that enable them to develop through growth and learning; (b) ensure that they have equitable access to the highest attainable standard of basic services and the widest scope of opportunities, including for education, participation and self-expression; and (c) further enable them, through such access, to create for themselves and their societies, better opportunities for the future.

A. Addressing discrimination and creating conditions for the universal realization of rights

17. The universality of rights, perhaps the most fundamental principle of human rights, calls for efforts to ensure that the rights established by Conventions are realized equally for all children and women. This means that development programmes need to address both the effects and the causes of exclusion and the denial of rights among some groups and individuals in society, including the processes which perpetuate various forms of inequality, discrimination and exploitation. A corollary of this approach is that attention is needed not only to increasing the coverage of basic services to higher overall levels; but also to identifying the groups and individuals who still lack access, establishing an understanding of the reasons why, and adopting specific measures to address these shortfalls together with those who remain excluded. Further, the universality of rights necessitates attention to the situation of children of all ages, defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child as persons up to the age of 18 years.

18. The principle of the "best interests of the child" established in the Convention requires that "in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration" (Article 3). This principle supports a child-focused approach to development. It points to the need to listen to children, to their rights to be informed and have their views taken seriously. In matters not governed by specific affirmations within the Convention, the "best interests" principle also provides States with criteria to evaluate the extent to which their laws and administrative practices operate in favour of children. This principle has been effectively invoked to argue, for example, that basic services for children and women must be protected during periods of economic austerity, political crisis and emergencies, as a matter of obligation. In addition, the principle relates directly to issues at the local level, such as the siting of new water points and the scheduling of school timetables.

19. These and other principles are also informing the nature of UNICEF interaction with sector-wide approaches and investment programmes. An approach to development based on human rights entails that issues of social inclusion, community and individual participation, service quality, sustainability and equitable outcomes should be seen as important factors in setting sectoral goals and as criteria for

assessing the success of reforms. For example, questions to be addressed in education sector reforms may include not only increased overall enrolment rates and learning achievement goals but also the degree to which schools will become safe, conducive and responsive learning environments for children, or will offer more equitable access to girls and to children who are working, orphaned or disabled. Issues in health system reform may need to include the degree to which the system ensures easy and dignified access for women from poor families to services needed to ensure safe pregnancy and childbirth, as well as participation and accountability in the service delivery process. A number of UNICEF offices, such as those in Bangladesh, Ghana and Zambia, are supporting Governments to integrate issues of this nature as part of social sector reforms and in mainstream service delivery.

20. The evolution of perspectives based in human rights has also helped UNICEF in recent years to reorient its programme approaches to children in need of special protection. This thinking was presented to the Executive Board in 1996, in a report on UNICEF policies and strategies on child protection (E/ICEF/1996/14). In programming for highly disadvantaged children, a rights perspective starts from the premise that societies have an obligation to ensure equitable access to the protection and services enjoyed by all other children, as a matter of central concern for public sector policies, administrative practice and expenditure. This includes rights to health care, basic education, freedom from violence and the safety and protection of a caring community.

21. This approach reflects a more general shift from a time when the most disadvantaged children were widely considered as objects of charity rather than holders of rights with valid claims on society. They were often perceived as problems to society rather than as individuals affected by society's failures to meet its obligations to all its children. Today, UNICEF approaches to children in need of special protection encourage Governments and other partners to take priority actions to meet the immediate needs of such children, while at the same time addressing the systemic problems that deny them opportunities for health care and learning, and which may force them out of families and schools into dangerous occupations or conflict with the law.

22. Programming from a rights perspective also calls for a better definition of quantitative and qualitative indicators, in order to reflect new areas of intervention and a stronger focus on attitudes and practices, participatory processes and issues of inequality. Several UNICEF regional and country offices are developing child rights data bases and, as in Latin America and the Caribbean, are producing social indicator bulletins with partners that examine questions of equity as well as overall access to basic services. A number of recent country-level situation analyses, such as those in India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Africa, have focused particularly on disparities, both in terms of outcomes among children and women and their causes.

23. Where data collection is disaggregated, for example by gender, type of household and geographical area, this facilitates better assessments of the situation of children and women and a more comprehensive understanding of factors that help or hinder the realization of their rights. Efforts to collect disaggregated baseline data have been undertaken in a large number of countries, including through national household surveys. In Eastern and Southern Africa, South Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF has initiated work to include key development indicators, disaggregated where possible to the district level, in a regional "Child Info" data base. The "TransMONEE" project, which monitors social conditions in economies in transition and is based at the International Child Development Centre, is a further example of disaggregated data analysis at a regional level. Multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) to measure progress towards goals for children and development are another key instrument to support the analysis of disparities as well as overall national achievements, and to provide a basis for country programme strategies that address more directly the needs of especially disadvantaged children.

B. Shaping more convergent approaches to development outcomes

24. The interdependence, indivisibility and complementarity of rights are further important guiding principles for programming. Both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women demonstrate the integrated and mutually reinforcing nature of civil, political, cultural, social and economic rights. While these Conventions establish no hierarchy among rights, development programmes which aim to promote their realization are still faced with the challenge of establishing priority areas for immediate action. Medium-term goals and objectives can assist in giving substance to the interventions agreed as having priority in the country context. The prioritization process itself should, however, be based on a comprehensive assessment of the status of children's and women's rights, as well as on a discussion of which areas constitute the greatest immediate threats to or opportunities for pursuit of these rights, an analysis of the reasons for

current trends, and an understanding of why past development activities either failed or succeeded in contributing to progress. Given that the full and sustained realization of human rights often will entail profound changes — in institutional structures, legal provisions, access to resources, social attitudes and practices — the selection of strategies and priority actions for the short-term should also be guided by a vision, among development partners, of how such longer-run shifts in society can effectively be promoted and achieved.

25. The linkages between children's and women's rights are increasingly well understood. It is widely recognized, for example, that the status and education of women and girls are among the factors most critical to lowering infant mortality rates and improving the health, nutrition and education of children. Women's status, role and well-being are central both to human development and to the realization of the human rights of children. The persistence of grossly unequal gender relations and wide gender gaps in the social, economic, political and civic spheres not only constitutes a denial of the individual human rights of girls and women, but also tends to reduce human capabilities and threaten social cohesion. At the same time, progress in realizing the rights of children, including specific actions for the rights of girls, can contribute decisively to breaking the persistence, from one generation to another, of discrimination against women. Development strategies and practice have yet to fully reflect the importance of these linkages. From a rights perspective, it becomes important for programme strategies, including those of the partners in the United Nations system, to achieve convergence between efforts for the realization of the rights of children and of women.

26. A rights-based approach to development has also reinforced the UNICEF focus on issues of well-being for the child as a person whose capacities are evolving and whose needs are simultaneously physical, emotional and intellectual. This perspective was previously reflected in the 1984 policy document on early childhood development (E/ICEF/1984/L.1), which outlined the importance of strategies that address the whole child and create synergy between the multiple activities required to ensure the survival, growth, development and protection of young children. The strong links to the health and well-being of the child's mother, and the recognition of the responsibilities of both men and women for the nurturing, protection and education of the child, are now being further emphasized in the context of a rights-based approach. The changing needs of children as they grow, and the need for consistency between interventions targeted to children at different ages, including in adolescence, is also receiving greater recognition.

27. The design of more convergent approaches to development outcomes for children should also be based on an understanding of the roles and obligations of various actors in society in respect of children's rights. Analysis at the family level can highlight the practical difficulties faced by parents, care givers and local voluntary associations in contributing to the rights of children, including, in many cases, a lack of access to services, information and economic resources. This analysis can also lead to better understanding of the extent to which such public institutions as schools, health facilities, municipal councils and extension services actually fulfill their obligations to families and children, and the constraints they face in doing so. Such analysis may increase awareness of the roles of national bodies in ensuring a supportive legal, policy and regulatory environment for the realization of rights and making resource commitments for the achievement of specific development goals. It can guide international cooperation to support these national obligations; and generate a wider recognition of the need for empowering families and communities to undertake and act upon their own analysis of issues affecting the rights of children.

28. In all parts of the world, customary laws, social practices and cultural values exert major influences on the degree to which children and women exercise their rights. Development partners need to understand these factors prior to designing programme approaches and to work closely with national and local organizations to address those practices that may either be harmful to women and children or represent strengths on which to build. In dealing with female genital mutilation, for example, approaches need to combine legislative measures with advocacy, communication and other strategies to bring about changes in established attitudes and practices. As seen in Senegal, this can create a social movement in favour of both the enactment and enforcement of legislation which protects rights. In the case of HIV/AIDS, such traditions as extended family care for orphans need to be recognized as a legitimate social service, even if external support is also required to help communities and families cope with the burden. Constructive and engaged approaches to cultural values are thus of central importance to the sustained realization of human rights.

C. Strengthening the programming process

29. Assessment, analysis and the search for actions that lead to sustained outcomes involve participatory processes

that engage families, community leaders and children. A rights approach necessitates that UNICEF and partners relate to and support people who are poor as key actors in their own development. This implies the need for — and not merely the option of — programmes that establish and support dialogue and interaction between families, communities and public sector service providers and decision-makers. It makes increased and equitable participation — such as the self-expression of children in school settings or in judicial proceedings, based on their age and capacities — both a key strategy for development outcomes, as has been widely recognized in the past, and a desired outcome in itself. A rights approach thus implies specific efforts to strengthen participatory processes in society, as well as in development programmes, by promoting conditions and opportunities for it to grow.

30. Partnerships with local authorities are generating dynamic approaches to participatory programming in such countries as Benin, Colombia, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica, Mauritania, Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda. The use of a rights-based framework in these and other countries has created a broader view of issues affecting children and greater consensus on the actions required at various levels of society, building in some cases on plans of action developed following the World Summit for Children. As part of decentralized programme implementation, mayors and city and regional councils also have been mobilized in the promotion of children's rights, including in Brazil, Croatia, India, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Peru, Poland, Romania and South Africa. The growth of local "child-friendly movements", such as that in the Philippines, is a further example of approaches which can result in increased recognition of children's rights in such institutions as schools and health facilities and in local administration.

31. Meanwhile, the analytical content of situation analyses of children and women supported by UNICEF has evolved, as countries have aimed to identify the causes of outcomes affecting children's rights. The approach to this analysis used by many countries in the 1990s was based on the conceptual framework contained in the UNICEF nutrition strategy adopted by the Executive Board in 1990 (decision 1990/19, (E/ICEF/1990/13)). This has been further oriented towards a more explicitly rights-based framework which includes examination, at the level of structural causes, of the values, laws, policies and patterns of resource access that affect child survival, development, protection and participation. Recent country examples of such analysis include Albania, Angola, Cambodia, India, Kenya, Mauritania, Niger, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia and Thailand. The assessment and causal analysis of the status of children's and women's rights can be key contributions supported by UNICEF to knowledge and understanding of these issues and to the CCAs undertaken by United Nations country teams as a whole. They also provide a basis for promoting the interests of children and women through advocacy and policy dialogue and through the building of consensus on priority actions.

32. As recognized by the 1990 nutrition strategy and shown by experience since, identifying strategies for improved outcomes for children and to reach and sustain development goals, calls for partners to review the causes of problems at different levels and to ask why certain conditions seem to persist. A lack of economic resources may be one cause of inadequate outcomes, especially in individual households and communities. Often, however, these outcomes have as much to do with the distribution of resources in society, unequal access to public services, the unequal status of women and discrimination against or exploitation of certain social groups. For this reason, the reduction of poverty and the realization of children's rights cannot be divorced from the building of just and equitable societies, supported where necessary by public policy reforms.

33. Experience has also shown that operational strategies to achieve and sustain outcomes that contribute to the realization of children's rights cannot be based on sectoral approaches alone. This was recognized in the 1970s and 1980s by efforts to achieve integration in basic service provision and continues to be evident in renewed efforts to design convergent approaches for the improvement of early childhood care. During the 1990s, the persistence of such problems as malnutrition and HIV/AIDS has brought this awareness still more sharply into focus. In the case of malnutrition, the care of both children and mothers is frequently a central factor in ensuring healthy growth, in addition to a safe environment, family food security and access to basic services. In the case of HIV/AIDS, unequal gender relations, the social vulnerability of girls and a lack of attention to the specific needs of adolescents are among the underlying reasons why the virus continues to spread in so many countries, affecting young people aged 10–24 years and girls disproportionately.

34. Stronger distinctions are now being made in practice between assessment (the "what"), analysis (the "why") and action (the "how") in respect of child-related development outcomes and the status of children's and women's rights. While the assessment phase should take account of the full range of concerns of both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, analysis of

particular problems among these leads to strategic choices and the design of interventions. Many programming processes have aimed especially to strengthen the analysis of gender relations in society as a guide to making strategic choices on priority actions. Work being undertaken to enhance UNICEF capacity in this area of work is described in the progress report on mainstreaming gender in UNICEF (E/ICEF/1999/13).

35. With improved assessment and analysis in a human rights framework, it is becoming easier to distinguish between the necessarily broad scope of UNICEF concerns for all children and women and the more specific priorities for UNICEF direct support to programme interventions in a national or local context. Taken together, these encompass a range of possible programme strategies, including: well-targeted advocacy on key issues for children's and women's rights; support to national assessment, legislation, policy development and monitoring of these rights; and, through other forms of programme cooperation, support to local initiatives, capacity-building and participatory action for basic service delivery and protection. While UNICEF engages with a range of national and international partners in advocacy, policy dialogue and in efforts to mobilize resources for children and women, it must continue to focus its direct support on those more specific areas where, in the country context, it has a comparative advantage and capacity to make a significant difference for children and their families.

36. In all regions, a human rights perspective has reinforced the search for collaboration opportunities that go beyond well-established partnerships in such areas as health, clean water and education to include agencies providing public safety and judicial, legal and welfare services, often at decentralized levels. Alliances with development banks, specialized agencies, professional and media groups, trade unions and employers' federations, and community and civil society organizations also characterize the broadening scope of UNICEF engagement in partnerships based on solidarity for children. Many of these alliances are focused on initiatives to reach the most marginalized groups and exploited children, whose rights are often least realized and respected.

37. In many countries, a rights-based approach has prompted UNICEF to explore options for supporting linkages between "mainstream" service delivery systems and "alternative" systems that benefit, and are often organized by, the poorest communities. Progress towards universally available services that provide equitable opportunities for the most marginalized groups in society has occurred at different speeds, depending on such factors as the state of public infrastructure and the extent of political commitment. Reliance on individual "area-based" projects has rarely proved sufficient to achieve this. In most regions, reorienting the public sector to meet basic needs for services and protection of the people who are poorest remains a major development challenge.

38. The mix of programme strategies now evident in new programmes for UNICEF cooperation, and in recommendations thereon to the Executive Board, thus tends to include a greater focus than in the past on supporting a range of policy reforms, building local capacity for basic service delivery, leveraging wider resources, broadening partnerships and facilitating community-led action, with special attention to the sustained participation of women, youth and children. Through the focus on partnerships, it is also possible to identify the key roles and necessary contributions of different sectors and actors and to situate UNICEF cooperation more strategically within broader developmental frameworks, such as the UNDAF, that will contribute to the rights of children and women.

39. In addition to the formulation of new programmes of cooperation, the mid-term reviews (MTRs) of current programmes often have provided opportunities for partners to devote more explicit attention to priority issues of children's rights. Adjustments adopted as a result of recent MTRs include: expanding the focus on children in need of special protection; restructuring programmes to support the development of cross-sectoral approaches; and strengthening the focus on generating behavioural change and focusing more directly on strategies to reach the most disadvantaged children and families. Also, where pilot initiatives have successfully combined an extension of basic service coverage with participatory approaches, MTRs have provided a basis for taking them to a larger scale.

40. The scope of UNICEF evaluation work in support of country programmes and for wider knowledge acquisition is also broadening in response to the challenges of a human rights approach. Current methodologies will need to be refined, and in some cases, new ones developed to support evaluative work not only on the impact but also the processes and outcomes promoted by programme cooperation, including participation, capacity-building, behavioural development and attitudinal and policy change. Qualitative methods increasingly are being used in programme evaluations, as well as approaches which recognize children, parents and communities as partners in the learning process.

41. A rights perspective has underscored the benefits to programming of a longer-term guiding vision, particularly

of a consensus for children which forms a central part of national policies for human development and human rights. Such a framework, particularly if developed through wide participation, can generate momentum for policy reforms and more reliable resource commitments. It can provide a basis for durable partnerships and alliances – including between agencies in the public, non-profit and private sectors – and assist in the identification of priority areas for international cooperation. The national plans of action for children have, in some countries, provided impetus towards these broader frameworks based on the centrality of children to development and the recognition of societal and public sector obligations for their rights.

42. In relation to this, the reports of States Parties and concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have played an increasingly important role in influencing national policy choices related to children, as well as in helping to identify priority issues for country programmes of cooperation. The work of UNICEF at country level has helped to inform States Parties' reports, as well the Committees' process of review, and in many instances UNICEF has assisted national entities in meeting their reporting obligations. Technical cooperation between countries is also growing in this area, an example being the assistance provided by Child Rights/Asianet in the preparation of country reports throughout South Asia. The Committees' concluding observations on States Parties' reports, as well as additional information provided by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have helped in turn to inform choices for country programme cooperation. One example is the greater emphasis placed by UNICEF on support to birth registration and public information on children's rights as a result of observations provided in 1997 on Bangladesh's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The national reporting process also provides an opportunity for United Nations agencies to examine how they can best collaborate to support national efforts to both monitor and comply with human rights treaty obligations.

43. A more specific issue of concern for the United Nations system is the limited resources available to support the work of the treaty bodies. The currently slow pace of work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the backlog in reviewing the reports of States Parties runs the risk of providing a disincentive for States in their efforts for reporting.

D. Developing rights-based indicators and monitoring

44. The need has emerged for a well-established set of indicators that will help to illuminate progress on both the processes and outcomes that contribute to children's rights across and within countries and over time. A number of indicators are already widely used, based in part on the goals of the World Summit for Children, and have been monitored through such mechanisms as the MICS. However, indicators have not yet been fully developed or widely adopted in some areas of children's rights, such as those relating to protection and participation. Specification of local standards against which monitoring will take place is also needed in some cases. A UNICEF-supported meeting in 1998, which brought together international experts in development, statistics and human rights, identified a preliminary set of indicators as well as selection criteria for areas which so far lack a basis for indicator definition. While this work will need further development, it is an important step in advancing the monitoring of the progressive achievement of children's rights.

45. As part of the preparation for measuring progress at the end of the decade, questions on birth registration, child labour, disability and orphans have been incorporated into the MICS questionnaire, . As a result, the end-decade review of progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children is expected to generate data covering each of the six thematic clusters of rights issues defined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

46. The Child Rights Monitoring Project, initiated by Child Watch International and supported by UNICEF and several other donors over the period 1994 to 1998, has stimulated the development of child rights monitoring activities at the local level in a number of countries, including Nicaragua, Senegal, Thailand, Turkey, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. A training package resulting from this work provides a basis for developing local level rights monitoring systems in additional countries. The growth of "child-friendly" initiatives will also provide experience in the participatory use of indicators for such systems. The checklists provided in the UNICEF "Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child" is another tool to assist partners in programming and monitoring.

E. Building organizational capacity and learning

47. The future agenda for UNICEF and other development partners based on human rights will, to some degree, call for new approaches, competencies, partnerships and working methods. The development of staff capacity will be a specific priority for UNICEF in the next few years. Skills will be required throughout the organization in at least three critical areas to support effective programming and cooperation in a human rights perspective:

(a) Competencies for supporting planning processes central to a rights-based approach to programmes, including (i) the instruments of assessment, analysis, strategy development, implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation; and (ii) the integration in programming of measures to protect rights in situations of instability, to promote sustained participation, to reach people who remain excluded, to mainstream gender concerns and to assist the building of capacity in national partner organizations;

(b) Competencies for developing and managing programme partnerships based on the pursuit of outcomes for children's and women's rights, including with Governments, non-governmental, regional, civil society, private sector and community-based organizations, as well as with United Nations partners, the World Bank, the Save the Children Alliance, bilateral donors and others. This will include skills for developing advocacy partnerships for the protection of children's rights, which will sometimes involve sensitive issues where violations of these rights occur; for the leverage of resources for children and women; and for support to policy, legislative and sector reforms;

(c) Competencies for designing and pursuing strategies for convergence among sector-based activities and programmes to promote the achievement of cross-sectoral outcomes among children. Part of these competencies would include the acquisition of core information and understanding of how positive results can be sought, based on the best scientific knowledge and experience worldwide. More specific areas of technical competence will be needed among programme planners and other specialists, in areas of priority UNICEF focus for the next decade. These will include: early childhood care for survival, growth and development; basic education for learning achievement; and support to adolescent health and participation.

48. Because many aspects of a human rights approach require staff to address issues of social attitudes and behaviour, UNICEF capacity development will also focus on programming and communication skills for facilitating processes of participatory planning, behavioural change and community-led problem-solving. A focus will be placed on learning from experience and exposure to the thinking and practice of UNICEF-supported programmes which have focused successfully on these approaches and on learning from external agencies, including NGOs.

49. Assessment and documentation of innovations and more systematic dissemination of experience will need to take place in order to: (a) enable UNICEF to analyse what is learned as human rights principles are more widely and explicitly reflected in programmes of cooperation; (b) apply lessons more systematically in cooperation with partners; (c) update and revise programming guidelines, methodologies and training materials; and (d) facilitate stronger ties between countries that share common problems and possibilities for action, both within and across regions. UNICEF headquarters has appointed a senior officer to work with regional and country offices to facilitate lessons learning and the development of resource materials for rights-based programming, and to maintain programme-related dialogue in this area with international development partners. UNICEF is also establishing an electronic database on progress being made around the world in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This will be available through the UNICEF site on the world wide web and will include illustrations of the laws, structures, policies and processes that are being put in place to improve the situation of children within the framework of the Convention.

50. With regard to humanitarian crises, UNICEF has responded to field requests for support in training in international law and standards applicable in armed conflicts and unstable situations. The first field training took place in East Africa in February 1999. The training protocol aims both to raise awareness of the existing standards in human rights and humanitarian law and to establish the human rights framework as a practical tool in situations of crisis for children's and women's rights.

IV. Conclusion

51. In the context of current reform measures, it is encouraging that consensus is progressively emerging among United Nations country teams on the convergence between the human rights and development mandates of the various agencies. The CCA and UNDAF processes are moving the partnership among agencies closer to the vision of development and the role of the United Nations defined in its Charter, working within a more clearly normative

framework. This has been the case, for example, in Colombia, Namibia, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. A rights approach to development cooperation, founded in assessment and analysis, can be an effective instrument for enhanced partnerships and inter-agency collaboration based on a vision of how the United Nations system and its individual agencies can best contribute to efforts, by a range of national partners, for the realization of development goals and human rights. In the context of United Nations reform, the practical application of human rights principles in development cooperation, including that for children and women, is becoming more firmly established as a system-wide concern. From the perspective of UNICEF, country obligations in respect of human rights, together with national priorities and the agreed goals of global conferences, provide the foundation and the normative basis for United Nations collaboration with Member States. In this context, UNICEF has a leading role to play in ensuring that children's rights are a common concern for development partners and in providing advisory support for this area.

52. As the present report has indicated, UNICEF is in the process of gaining experience in the many dimensions of rights-based programming, and some of the more complex issues are still emerging. UNICEF has, however, an extensive body of previous experience from which to draw and learn, in programming for areas such as integrated approaches to young child development, basic services and reaching the most disadvantaged groups. Meanwhile, the recognition has grown within the organization and beyond that a human rights approach to programme cooperation, addressing both immediate and structural factors, is crucial for the lasting impact of initiatives for children. By emphasizing partnerships and participation, a human rights perspective can enhance the ownership of development programmes by local actors and the empowerment of people who are poor. It can also help to strengthen the accountability to parents and children of political leaders, public service providers and community organizers. It provides a basis for making the goals and commitments of international conferences such as the World Summit for Children more binding — and for making choices on practical, priority actions for children that contribute to the progressive realization of their rights. Monitoring and public reporting in fulfilment of Convention obligations can make issues of human rights more evident and information more readily available for citizens as well as development partners. As discussed in this report, UNICEF is playing direct support and advocacy roles in each of these dimensions of international cooperation for the pursuit of children's and women's rights.